162. The Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

Mr. A. Nayanar, B. A., B. L. (Member, Municipal Council, Nagercoil) represented that the Assembly, as it existed at present, was nothing more than a gathering of petitioners and that there was no community of interest among the members of that body. In order to make the Assembly a living force, the Member suggested that it should be invested with powers to bring forward resolutions and interpellations, to discuss and vote upon resolutions, to pass the State budget, and such other rights as were now being enjoyed by the Legislative Council for controlling the administration. To avoid duplication of functions, he suggested that the Legislative Council should confine its attention to legislation alone, while the Assembly should be given a statutory basis and entrusted with the control over the administration. In other words, the Member's idea was that all the powers now exercised by the Legislative Council, except that of legislation, pure and simple, should be transferred to the Assembly. Another prayer of the Member was that, if the reports called for from heads of departments upon the representations of members of the Assembly happened to be opposed to the suggestions of the members, the latter should be given an opportunity of replying to those reports before final orders were passed on them.

Mr. A. Rama Pai, M. A., B. L. (Member, Municipal Council, Quilon) prefaced his representation with the observation that at the time the Assembly was founded, it was a valuable boon conferred by His Highness the Maha Raja on His Highness' subjects and that even now it continued to do much useful work. Since the expansion of the Legislative Council under Regulation I of 1095, it had been rightly thought that some change was necessary in the constitution and working of the Assembly and so it was that the Government published draft rules on the subject over a year ago. It was the opinion of the Member that most of the rules were retrograde, the exceptions being the extension of the franchise, and the prolongation of the term of the membership to 3 years. The Member urged the reform of the Assembly on the lines of the Mysore and Pudukkotta Assemblies, and prayed that the members of the Assembly might be invested with the powers of asking interpellations, moving resolutions and discussing the State budget. Other changes advocated were that the Assembly should have a statutory basis, that its relations with the Legislative Council should be defined and that the franchise should be evolved on a more extensive basis than that for the Council.

163. Need for the continuance of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

Mr. K. Velayudhan Pillai (Member, Municipal Council, Parur), after tracing in detail the origin and development of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, passed on to enumerate its achievements during the past 18 years of its existence and mentioned a few of them. He then referred to the draft rules of the Assembly and said that what the public wanted was not merely a revision of the rules, but an announcement sanctioning the reconstitution of the Assembly, followed by the appointment of a committee of officials and non-officials—the latter being selected from among the members of the current session of the Assembly—to work out the details and to give effect to the changes contemplated in the announcement. He then passed in review the various provisions of the draft rules. Among the more important changes proposed by the Member were the following.

1. The franchise for the Legislative Council and the Assembly should be different.

2. The Dewan should preside over the Assembly and should not delegate his powers as President to any one else.

3. A meeting of the members before the representations were made should be held under the presidency of a Member of the Assembly and *not* that of the Division Peishkar as proposed in the draft rules. There was, however, no objection to the Division Peishkar being present and even taking part in the deliberations of the meeting.

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4. The list of 'reserved' subjects as at present maintained was unduly long and called for curtailment.

The Member strongly objected to the composition of the committee constituted by the Government for the revision of the revised draft rules relating to the Assembly and represented that it should have contained Members of the Assembly also and not merely those of the Legislative Council. The Member then proceeded to meet the arguments of those who said that the Assembly was not necessary. He held that its retention was indispensable.

In considering the powers to be given to the Assembly the Member made the following proposals :—

1. It should be given a definite place in the constitution of the State.

2. No new tax should be levied without consulting the Assembly.

3. It should be given the right to pass resolutions on all administrative matters and to discuss the State budget.

4. It should be consulted in regard to all important measures. The legislative programme of the year should be placed before the Assembly for its consideration.

5. Local subjects should not be discussed at the Assembly, but should be relegated to District or Taluk Boards.

The Member then pleaded for the sense of the Assembly being ascertained on the question of its continuance or otherwise. He was for retaining both the institutions—the Legislative Council and the Assembly—since both were effective instruments for serving the cause of the people.

Dewan's reply.—My reply to the three gentlemen who spoke about the Assembly is that their representations will be placed, so far as they can be so placed, before the Committee that is now sitting to consider the revision of the Assembly Rules, and that the representations will also be considered by Government after they receive the recommendations of that Committee.

The business of the session being over, the Dewan made the following speech before bringing the proceedings to a close :—

"Gentlemen, we have come to the end of the session, and I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that both sides of the House-if I may say so-have benefited very much by the discussions of these nine days. There has been a good deal of give and take on both sides and I am very thankful to the Members of the Assembly for complying with my request to observe the time-limit and for enabling me to bring this session of the Assembly to a close this evening. I now bid you good-bye. (*Applause.*)

The proceedings of the session were then brought to a close with three cheers to His Majesty the King Emperor, His Highness the Maha Raja and the Dewan.

The Assembly dissolved at 6-20 P. M.

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